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SCHOOL POLICY VIA SCHOOL FACTS

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It is now nearly fifty years since American educators formed an organization for the purpose of making their individual experience available to their fellow-laborers throughout the land. From the outset attempts have been made to secure the adoption of a common language for describing that experience. In 1872 the commissioner of education supported a plea for complete school statistics by quoting Napoleon, the great calculator, who attributed even his military successes to the statistical method: "Statistics means the keeping of an exact count of administrative facts, and without such count there is no safety." For a generation our National Bureau of Education published volume upon volume of school data; committee after committee reported to the National Educational Association—1859, 1863, 1885, 1887, 1889; yet it was possible in 1891 for an expert of the National Census Bureau to declare "no item of school statistics is now universally recorded throughout the country." Despite the elaborate recommendations reported in 1892, Superintendent Greenwood stated at the conference of 1901, that, while progress had been made in recording attendance, etc., reports were still "strangely mute on the question of the cost of giving children an education." Although searching diligently, he had been unable to secure "any tabulated results of various movements in the schools." Such, with a few notable exceptions, is the situation today.

This tardy progress may be attributed partly to the fact that the national reports have never reduced school data to comparable bases, and partly to the failure of the advocates of complete comparative statistics to relate their demand to personal and local needs. It is difficult to inspire general enthusiasm for statistics, if they are to be monopolized by magazine writers, historians, sociologists, and compilers of national reports. A teacher in Omaha is not thrilled by the promise that his co-operation will "hasten the universal system,"

which consummation he doubtless wants as little as Dooley's Chinaman wants railroads. Only the few can adopt for everyday consumption the clinical motive set up by Commissioner Harris in 1891: "A comparison of today with yesterday reveals the trend of the process," or by another's proof that "we should be able to compare ourselves with other nations," or to throw light upon "other social statistics, as illiteracy, crime, morals, wealth." The average principal or superintendent is confronted every morning by altogether too many besetting problems to permit himself to be deeply disturbed over the wealth of nations or the trend of the process. Few of us live in the rarified atmosphere where we subordinate our own perplexities to those of academic students of our work. Normal man will not commit statistics any more than he will commit crime without a motive.

Motive has in general been lacking, and when present is in large measure confined to pleasing some central official or conforming to the requirements of statute or by-law. Statistics have been thought of as mile-stones rather than as searchlights. Thus it is that in various discussions of the duties of the school superintendent, from the earliest meetings of the National Educational Association to that at St. Louis, yes, even to the book just issued on *Our Schools: Their Administration and Their Supervision*, there has been scant mention of school facts—complete, classified, intelligibly presented—as the first requisite to intelligent administration. Is the omission due to the predominance of altruism, patriotism, academics, in the motive hitherto emphasized at the starting-point for school statistics? Would it be well to add two more ingredients, self-interest and obligation to one's community?

President Yeager evidently had these questions in mind when he affirmed in 1895: "It is nothing but a large partnership business that we are conducting." To suggest that behind that partnership idea lies an impelling motive for collecting, classifying, studying, and obeying school facts is the purpose of this paper. Illustrations are chosen from the recent experience of Greater New York for two reasons: (1) it is with the New York situation that I am personally familiar; (2) that city's operations are of such magnitude, its problems so various and its present need so urgent, that it shows more clearly than any smaller city the inevitable consequence of failing

to use business principles—the statistical method—in the daily management of public schools.

The percentage of truant children or backward children in a town having five hundred pupils may be higher than in New York, but, because only dozens are involved instead of tens of thousands, no one is startled or shocked. Insanitary conditions that the small town accepts as part of its standard of living become intolerable in New York because the results upon public health and public comfort are enormous compared with the small world one ego occupies. Likewise, where there are over half a million pupils, mental pictures are produced by a school deficit, lack of sittings, failure to win promotion, careless use of supplies, ill-advised policy, such as can be produced in a small town by nothing less than Calamity—fire, explosion, embezzlement, or stupendous blunder. For the same reason, tendencies and results are brought to light more promptly—or might be—the city's educators being duly warned in terms which can be made to arouse public sentiment. It furnishes, you see, for its own officials, and for other cities wanting to benefit from its experience, the conditions that make Calamity such an effective educator; namely, a large number of victims in one place, at one time. Nowhere in this country, therefore, are dispensations of Providence so little needed. Yet up to the present time no economical substitute has been adopted by the New York schools, and Cumulative Misfortune continues to be our chief teacher. Having eyes, we see not; having a searchlight within easy reach, we grope in the dark; when we stumble, we hurry away from the obstacle instead of removing it. The sad results are known the world over; a vast army of misplaced pupils "long enough to reach from New York to Albany," existing for years, but brought to light for the first time this last autumn another army of part-time pupils; ten thousand to twenty-three thousand atypical children just discovered; threatened shortening of the school day for all young children; curtailment of those features intended to benefit more particularly the tenement child and his parents—vacation and evening schools, popular lectures, recreation centers; wholesale condemnation of subjects that most educators deem indispensable, when properly taught, to an adequate curriculum; a demoralizing succession of bitter personal controversies over school policy; a flood of specious

arguments for and against essential principles of pedagogics. Courage is waning, and confidence in the schools is shaken, while friends of education are rendered helpless by conditions that cause the city to pay exorbitant prices for its experience, using tons of cure instead of ounces of prevention, relying for light, not upon school facts, but upon such cruel, expensive, reactionary stimuli as deficit, curtailment, and loss of public confidence.

The essential elements of the method hitherto used in New York are three: (1) disregard of facts by fiscal authorities; (2) disregard of facts by educational authorities; (3) disregard of the public, by both fiscal and educational authorities. In 1903 the Board of Estimate and Apportionment *guessed* that the Board of Education was asking for \$900,000 more than was required for the work it contemplated. The educators *guessed* that no economy was possible in any of its departments, notwithstanding combined disbursements exceeded \$20,000,000. Between the two stood the public, neither consulted nor informed until the ultimatum stage was reached. Neither party to the controversy—the grave social problem has been treated as a personal controversy—presented facts upon which the public could base sound judgment and intelligent support. For the greater part of two school years the public has been told over and over again (1) That the defects of the schools were due to unwarranted attacks upon the system and disregard of its needs by the comptroller; (2) that these defects were due to miscalculated and misdirected expenditures of effort and money by the educators. Which is true? The New York method provides no answer. Without attempting to answer the question here, or to compute the damage to the cause of education resulting from such a dilemma, let us see whether and in how far the New York method of instructing the public with regard to school policy fails to recognize the partnership idea.

The recognized center of publicity regarding the school affairs of New York has been the superintendent's office. Even in matters of administration it has been the custom until recently for the board to ask the superintendent for information regarding its own needs and workings. We should naturally look, therefore, to his public utterances—annual reports, addresses, and interviews—for the New York method. In view of the bitter controversies and the

fiscal and educational deficits of the past year, we should expect the annual report just distributed to represent the high-water mark of effort to win intelligent public support. It will therefore be fair to the New York method if we cite that report as its epitome.

The report covers the school year ending July 31, 1904, and contains 365 pages of 40 lines each, or equivalent, in tabular matter. It was given to the public in the second half of the current school year. The sequence of its matter is determined neither by apparent logical plan nor by obvious public needs. Because it contains no topical index, no complete summaries, and no headings—page, marginal, paragraph—it is necessary to read line by line to make sure that all facts regarding a particular subject have been obtained. There is, however, a table of contents showing the sequence of general subjects in the chief report, and the sequence of reports from departmental heads.

We have assumed that one of the purposes of this document is to win intelligent public support. Whether taxpayer or citizen, parent or student, we want to know just what we tried to do last year, in what measure we succeeded, whether result justified outlay, what to avoid or to undertake this coming year. We have the right to look to this report for proof acceptable to the supreme court: that schools have not been extravagant; that special subjects, alias "fads and frills," have not cost too much in time or money; that teachers have not been oversupervised; that the part-time policy is wasteful and unjust; that the system has suffered appreciably owing to curtailment of its appropriations; that natural growth has been arrested, thus incurring grave social deficits. Will you be surprised to know that not one of these propositions can be proved by any evidence contained in the report? If we look for conclusive proof that our educational authorities are not in the habit of asking for one dollar more than the minimum amount required to do their duty, we find on p. 78 the nonchalant prophecy that the reduction of appropriations demanded for the current year by over one million dollars will really cause no reduction whatever of service rendered. If we turn the searchlight upon the future to inform ourselves as to the direction our course is taking, the problems that will beset us, and the most effective means of grappling with those problems, we must lay the report aside as undecided as before reading it.

With the exception hereafter mentioned, the report does not concern itself seriously with any of the problems that have agitated the public for the last two years, but asserts (p. 49): "The most important problem of the day is how to get the older pupils cumbering the lower grades into the higher grades." No remedy whatever is offered further than to say that "to the solution of the problem the Board of Superintendents, the district superintendents, and the principals must devote their best efforts." Would the superintendent of a railroad thus dismiss a problem involving 192,000 customers (or 350,000), two out of every five (or three) on his books? Of the astonishing number of pupils of abnormal age the report says (p. 47): "Inquiry develops the truth that this condition of affairs has existed for many years; it is now brought to light for the first time." Why not brought to light earlier? Has any method been devised by which such facts shall in future be promptly brought to light? The report does not say. That it is unlikely would be a safe inference from the method by which the number of children of abnormal age has been reached and the reasons assigned for "the most important problem of the day."

In computing the proportion of children of abnormal age in the elementary schools, p. 47 of the report gives 491,674 as the whole number of pupils. This number differs from every other total given in the report, and cannot be obtained by any combination of figures that I have been able to work out. The expression "above normal age" does not include a child of seven to eight in the first year, one of eight to nine in the second year, one of fourteen to fifteen in the eighth year, etc. If we should assume, therefore, as some do, that the normal child should reach the second grade when between seven and eight, rather than between eight and nine; the sixth grade between twelve and thirteen, instead of between thirteen and fourteen; the eighth grade between fourteen and fifteen, instead of between fifteen and sixteen; then the number of pupils to be reported above normal age on June 30, 1904, was 350,000 and not 192,000. In other words—using the assumption of the average man, and the assumption on which both the table of averages on p. 47 and the first reason assigned for the "unfortunate condition" are based—350,000 out of 492,000 children, seven out of every ten, were, throughout last year, from one to seven years behind the grade proper for their age.

The report gives four reasons for this newly discovered condition of long standing, without, however, offering one fact to substantiate either: (1) Well-to-do families send their children to school at the age of seven instead of six. (2) The large-sized classes retard promotion. (3) Teaching in the part-time pupils is necessarily less effective and operates to retard promotion. (4) The great influx of non-English-speaking pupils every week into our schools congests the lower grades with pupils above normal age. Since not one of these propositions need be left to guesswork, it would be worth while to know absolutely the number of children of each category. Is it conceivable that the responsible head of a department store would be content to guess four causes for the loss of seven customers out of ten without ascertaining where and how extensively each cause had operated? Well-to-do parents may be acting under the impression that their children will complete the course earlier by entering at seven rather than six. It may be that the largest percentage of abnormal age are in classes that are not too large. It may be that part-time pupils are promoted more rapidly than full-time pupils; at any rate, the report claims that "pupils on part time are not suffering seriously." It may be that the non-English-speaking Russian Jew or German or even Italian is so eager to learn that he is promoted, leaving behind his English-speaking fellow. These "ifs" are not at all unreasonable. They are suggested to emphasize the importance of knowing rather than guessing, when problems of such grave consequence are involved. Many of the best schools of the country have in operation a plan by which the necessary facts would have come to light on September 15 instead of June 30, and would have been kept up to date as the year progressed and pupils entered or dropped out.

The danger of guessing is shown by the fact that the borough to which each of the four explanations above given would probably apply with least force, Richmond shows the largest percentage of children above normal age, exceeding in every grade the average percentage for the entire city by from 5.4 per cent. in the first year to 22.7 per cent. in the fifth year. Another illustration of the slip twixt guess and truth is found in the explanation of average attendance. In 1903 the congested districts showed the highest percentage of average attendance. The reason was given solemnly (p. 35):

"The children have the shortest distances to walk." In 1904, however, the congested districts showed the lowest percentage, but a sense of humor prompted silence and saved us another guess. How demoralizing to the public is this wheel-of-fortune method of determining school policy is illustrated by the full-page story in the *Sunday World* of February 12, apropos of breakfastless children: "Mr. Hunter says that the superintendent says that Miss Booth says that Mr. Hunter says seventy thousand children go hungry to school in New York." An attempt to prove any one of the four propositions accounting for the presence of older pupils in the early grades might have led to the discovery of ten thousand atypical children in June, 1904, rather than in March, 1905.

The report expresses concern because so few of the older pupils complete the elementary course. As proof that they do not, we are offered the average age of the graduates, namely fourteen years and five months in Manhattan, and about fourteen years and ten months in Brooklyn. The city average is not computed. This average age is made to serve the double purpose (p. 49) of "disconcerting the critics of the new course of study, for, notwithstanding the extension of the course of study from seven years to eight years, there has been no increase in the average age of the graduates. On the contrary, it has been slightly lower." To a layman this method of reasoning is far more disconcerting than the facts stated. The average Brooklyn graduate is about five months older than his fellow-graduate in Manhattan. Brooklyn has had the eight-year course for years. Manhattan's adoption of the longer course is accompanied by an immediate decrease in the average age of the graduates. Does this mean that older pupils do not drop out, or is it more reasonable to suppose that in both Brooklyn and Manhattan almost all of the older pupils do drop out, and in addition a considerable number of younger pupils eligible for graduation? The total number graduating was one thousand, probably two thousand less than the number of eighth-grade pupils "under average age." How many over average age might have graduated, had they remained? How many over average age actually graduated? How many under average age dropped out of the race? Here as elsewhere the report fails to compare results with possibilities, hence fails utterly to show relative efficiency of short and long courses, or of the school system.

This extended statement regarding older children in the lower grades is given in order to show the New York method of presenting to the public "the most important problem of the day." The readers of the *School Review* must have observed ere this the underlying weakness of the assumption that the child of ten in a third-year class necessarily obstructs the progress of younger pupils in that class. Supposing that thirty-seven thousand children over ten in the third grade win promotion regularly from grade to grade to the day of graduation, would their presence entail hardship upon their younger fellows? Whether they do keep up, just when they drop back or drop out, and why, is for the records to show. A fact recorded is worth ten guesses. The Board of Education cannot hope to discharge its obligation to the school child and the community until it requires such records.

The purpose of the *School Review* in asking for this article was to bring home to educators throughout the country the conviction that the empirical method of reasoning above indicated is in part, if not wholly, responsible for the "short day and other reactionary policies," the very thought of which startles and shocks American educators. Who could have believed five years ago that the city of New York would ever be asked to adopt three and a half hours as its standard school day? Yet at the time of writing this consummation is perilously near. That the issue must be met this year was known when the superintendent's report was prepared. Surely the New York method would give its best to this momentous problem. What is done to win public support for a five-hour day? The superintendent introduced briefly an elaborate article of the Board of Superintendents against the short day (pp. 79, 98). The facts offered in evidence are not based upon any former report or any permanent record, but upon a comparison of examinations taken by four classes of pupils: part-time pupils attending forenoon session, part-time pupils attending afternoon session, part-time classes alternates mornings and afternoons and full-time pupils attending two sessions daily. The results show that "in reading all-day children are clearly covering twice as much ground in a given time as the part-time children." Full-time pupils average 79.6 per cent. in written arithmetic, while part-time pupils average only 77.3 per cent., morning part-time

averaging 78 per cent., and afternoon part-time averaging 75.5 per cent. For the test the district superintendents chose their best teachers—the number is not given—acting independently also in drafting questions. We are not told the number of classes or pupils examined, whether the classes were of the same size, or what the average of the best pupils in each category. In other words, instead of a test based upon promotion or recorded results throughout the entire system, the public is given an elaborate argument built upon exceptional conditions in nobody knows how many exceptional classes. Is it surprising that the Board of Education regarded this as *ex parte* testimony and voted for the short day? Moreover, those who hold the Board responsible for this so-called reactionary policy overlook the fact that the same report which conveyed the sociological argument of the Board of Superintendents against a shorter day contained also the opinion of the superintendent that part-time pupils do not suffer seriously (p. 35), and that the most important problem is not the length of day (p. 49).

Steadily for two years the friends of thorough, liberal education have lost ground. Truths that seemed firmly established in 1903 are now obscured by theories then foreign to school discussion. While holding "for dear life" to vacation schools, recreation centers, and physical training, we have been importuned to reach out for free breakfasts. Loyally defending the five-hour day as the minimum required for school purposes, we have been exhorted to discern and defend new-born functions of the school to supplement the work of playground, nursery, and police. Issues are changed so frequently that, after being driven from one stronghold to another, we are left, like the faithful but unskilled advocate of the Westminster creed, almost "alone with our total depravity." Such is the penalty we pay for accepting strategy rather than facts as our guide; for studying the public pulse instead of the public schools.

"Vacation schools and recreation centers" was the slogan used in 1904 to arouse public indignation against the reduction of school funds by the fiscal authorities. But the "crying injustice" of January, 1904, must have lost its significance by the following June, for the *Annual Report* gives but half a dozen lines to the topic, referring on p. 145 to the report of the division superintendents for light showing

"how great a calamity it would have been to close the vacation schools and playgrounds and recreation centers." In his own report the impression is given that no great damage resulted, p. 78, saying: "All the outside activities were kept open for the usual time, though not on so extensive a scale as would have been the case had more money been available." Not a word for the composite partner in denial of the volume of indictments published by the comptroller that these outside activities were administered in an unbusinesslike manner. Not a word outlining future needs and preparing the public to demand expansion further than a half-page of generalization in support of using to the utmost the \$60,000,000 invested in school property.

For the lay supporter of public schools to learn exactly how the work of the so-called outside activities suffered last year means multiplying, adding, subtracting, and dividing combinations of figures on pp. 76, 79, and 285-329 of the report for 1904, and pp. 126, 127, 143-57, and 161-91 of the report for 1903. Results of all this labor would hardly be accepted in court, because the original material is not properly classified. We do learn, however, that the vacation schools not only failed to increase to meet additional demands and opportunities, but decreased in number from 54 to 39; that the number of pupils per teacher averaged 29, varying from 50 to 13; that, while 15 schools were discontinued, the 39 remaining schools were given 203 excursions—at what expense we are not told. On vacation playgrounds the average attendance varied from 70 to 120. In the evening recreation centers the number of pupils per teacher varied from 21 to 162. The same number of teachers was required for a roof playground having an average attendance of 904 as for another averaging 2,838. The number of baths decreased from 15 to 2, although the reduction is nowhere mentioned or explained editorially; in one of the two baths three teachers were required to watch or teach 120 children each, while at the other two teachers averaged only 58 each (a vast improvement over 1903, when 57 teachers averaged only 9 pupils each); on p. 312 the statement is made that 1,500 children used the showers in one afternoon in School 188, a feat possible only on condition that 17 children used each shower every hour the school was open, an average of three and a half minutes

per bath. In several schools showing decrease in the number of pupils enrol'ed and average attendance, the number of teachers was increased.

At a time of general censure and uncertainty, when taxpayers have heard methods used by principals, teachers, and superintendents challenged, does not a proper regard for partnership responsibility require that such discrepancies be explained or corrected? We have positively no indication that the school authorities have ever discovered these discrepancies. Now, if the standard number of pupils for one teacher in a vacation playground is 71, Manhattan should have had 125 more teachers, and the report should have shown it. If, however, 220 is standard, then Manhattan had 100 teachers to spare either for additional playgrounds or possibly for historical excursions to children whose summer school was discontinued. If 21 is standard for an evening recreation center—having 8 teachers—then the city should have 200 teachers instead of 102. If 60 is standard—the average for the entire city—then why should 10 out of 24 centers have over 80 children per teacher, and why should 30 teachers have from 21 to 33 pupils only? If there are similar discrepancies in supplies furnished for outside activities, we have presumption of extravagant use of public money. To suggest that the authorities were not aware of these discrepancies may exculpate them from the charge of wilful extravagance, but does not mitigate the evils of a method that fails to discover and prevent.

Whether similar discrepancies exist among the evening schools we cannot learn from the report. That economy was attempted we learn from p. 287: "Owing to decrease in attendance (proportion of ingredients unknown), and for the sake of economy (proportion of ingredients unknown), 291 classes (number of children unknown) were discontinued." This fact is not mentioned in the chief report. One other fact received no editorial comment, namely, one-half of the teachers in the evening schools are taken from the day schools, chosen because of special qualifications. It might throw light on the expediency of this policy if we could know whether the part-time pupils whose misfortunes were made the basis of fact-testimony against the shorter school day were being instructed by best teachers working both night and day. It would also be worth while to inquire

whether the evening schools that failed to hold the interest of pupils were those presided over by men or women who had already given a day's service before meeting their evening pupils. Another inquiry regarding evening schools is prompted by the partnership idea: How much should the superintendent add to the per capita cost of evening schools as given for those items not included, janitors' service, coal, supplies, incidentals, etc.?

Our educators have been charged with sacrificing elementary for high schools, and so-called essentials for so-called fads and frills. The city comptroller's indictment was scathing; the press ran fad columns for weeks; the infection spread to teachers, principals, board members, even to *Vogue*. This vigorous agitation plainly influenced the board when it voted in favor of a shorter day for all younger pupils. The staunchest friends of the existing policy deplored the vote, but begged the curriculum-makers to lay less stress upon branches that they themselves called special, and to give more attention and more money to elementary courses and so-called regular branches. To quote the Woman Principals' Association, the Male Principals' Association, and the Bronx Teachers' Association: "The course is deficient in unity and assignment of grade work to meet the mentality of children more time should be given to English, mathematics, history, geography, reading, and word-spelling drawing, sewing, music, manual training should be given less time music is too technical, nature-study needs to be improved."

Those living outside of New York cannot realize how agitated the public mind has been, and how distressed the friends of progressive school policy. Instead of the school facts that we needed, we have been given charges of "ignorance," "personal" and "political motive." Yet the report submitted at the very height of the agitation, does not attempt to meet, in fact ignores, the issue. Special branches are referred to in the chief report as follows: Page 38 gives the number of teachers per borough for each special subject; p. 70, the number of applications for licenses; pp. 141-43, a résumé of departmental reports. The convincing paragraphs on the "pre-adolescence stage," "socializing value of arts," "communal work," "sub-dominant triads," "social comprehension," "expression responding to instinct-

ive desires," even the interesting treatise on physical training, are evidently intended for professional colleagues rather than lay partners. Not one word to show what the challenged subjects cost in time and money, how much per child benefited; not a bit of negotiable testimony to prove that children have benefited in the past.

The high schools are likewise not permitted to answer the charges against them. The report for Manhattan shows that 15 children out of 1,000 on average attendance were in high schools. We learn by computation that 90 parts in 1,000 of sums spent for instruction were for their benefit, the tuition alone for each pupil enrolled being \$84.40. There is no comparison, as in the case of other schools, showing what the per capita is, and whether greater or smaller than the preceding year. The partner who is financing the venture, and who is being urged to give more generously for the support of high schools, can nowhere find out—as he could if he lived in St. Louis—what it costs to place a high-school education within reach of an ambitious poor child; what portion of the total cost goes for supervision, for principals, for administration expenses, for supplies, textbooks, reference books, janitors' service, coal, furniture, apparatus, etc. But our report does give ream upon ream regarding the examination of pupils in botany and elementary French, in drawing and geometry without, however, one summary showing the "trend of the process." Nowhere is the number entering high schools compared with those prepared for it by the elementary schools; nowhere the percentage dropping out the first year; nowhere the proportion graduating to those entering four years preceding. We find no hint that our school officers have yet learned that the average high-school attendance is but 60.7 per cent. of those registered, and that the percentage of average total attendance was but 69.6 per cent., and that the percentage of average attendance to average register was 7 points lower than in Boston and Chicago, over 8 points lower than in Milwaukee, even Baltimore leading by nearly 5 points. Would not the financial backer of a factory want to know whether and why his plant turns out a poorer quality or smaller quantity of product than his competitor in near-by cities?

It is the same disappointing story whatever question we wish answered. Even sadder are the few attempts to base theory upon

facts, for the "innocuous desuetude" of the fact-sense prevents accuracy and sound method. This explains the small-cap heading on p. 34, "Increase in Average Attendance," notwithstanding the fact that average attendance had lost three points compared with net and average enrolment. Again, in preparing the way for discussion of part time (p. 33), the sittings of June are placed in humiliating contrast with the pupils enrolled the following September. We know the pupils increased from June to September. Is it intended for us to infer that the sittings did not increase? That this is not the fact we know from p. 24, which shows that by November 15 many sittings had been added. If the sittings of June be compared with the average register for the year preceding—a number which was probably much larger than the June register—the deficiency of sittings is only 3,000 instead of scores of thousands. If, however, the June sittings be compared with average attendance, we have a surplus of 41,000 sittings. I am aware that these figures give a wrong impression, but no one can fail to admit that they come nearer the truth than those given in the report.

The error of both the report and my computation is the assumption which prevails throughout the entire report, that unclassified totals have administrative value. If the overcrowding is in the first few grades, we might as well have a vacant sitting on the North Pole as in the eighth grade. There is no excuse for adding any sitting to our total, unless it can be used for seating the pupils now suffering for want of seats. If there are 34,100 children in New York who cannot get seats, the deficiency is 34,100, whether Richmond has 1,237 or 12,000 seats to spare. If, as the report states, there are 70,000 pupils on part time who cannot practically be seated where there are vacant seats, then the deficiency is 35,000. Yet to this date there is no accessible summary showing in just what grades seats are lacking and where there are seats to spare; what proportion of children in those particular grades are on part time, or what percentage average attendance bears to total seats, grade by grade, school by school.

Compulsory education cannot be enforced without a school census, yet the report does not mention this need. Nobody in New York knows the number of children subject to the compulsory-education

law for which we have worked so hard. The committee of 1892 did not seem to realize the uselessness of a table showing the number of children eligible for free schooling without showing at the same time the number of children who must be in school. If percentages based upon Milwaukee's school census approximate those of New York, the latter city either has 140,000 children of compulsory-school age in private and corporate schools, or else there are thousands upon thousands whom the truant officers have not located. That such is the probability is suggested on p. 101 by the superintendent of School Division 1. The report does not state the number of compulsory-school age in corporate schools, although the city paid \$284,000 for tuition in such schools. Despite the urgent need for economy, no attempt is made to ascertain the number of non-resident pupils who have free tuition in New York—information that nets the small city of New Brunswick, N. J., over \$1,000 annually.

The current report of 365 pages of forty lines each tells less about the efficiency of the schools and the points needing administrative attention than can be set up in one comparative table, such as was recommended by the committee of 1892, and such as is in use by Newark, Baltimore, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Boston, and many other cities. Those interested in making reports serviceable to both layman and teacher may profitably compare the New York method with that of the state superintendent of Connecticut, whose tables of ranking brilliantly illustrate the application of the statistical method to school administration.

The New York Board of Education has come to recognize the grotesqueness of the present method of attempting to solve the most difficult school problems before any city in the world without the aid of school facts. For some weeks a special committee of five, consisting of an expert accountant, a banker, and three lawyers, including the president, all trained in methods of large enterprise, have been considering means of standardizing departments of instruction, janitors, and sites along lines already in partial operation in the departments of buildings and supplies.

This committee is the direct outgrowth of a communication from the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in behalf of vacation and night schools, recreation centers, and

popular lectures. That association had done the pioneer work in maintaining vacation schools that led to the city's undertaking this summer work. After consulting a recognized expert, Professor F. A. Cleveland, it urged the Board of Education to provide itself with independent facilities for obtaining information: "A method automatically correlating administrative with educational records would continually and instantly disclose the weakest spots in the system you are seeking to make strong, the least profitable of the expenditures you are seeking to render remunerative, as well as the first signs of the waste and duplication you are seeking to prevent." Let it be borne in mind that this method was urged, not as a means of retrenchment, but as the best possible means of securing more liberal appropriations from the public, not only for general educational purposes, but more particularly for popular lectures, recreation centers, vacation and night schools.

The method, when worked out, will have special significance for the entire country, because it will have grown from urgent need rather than academic theory, from a desire for local rather than universal system, from obligation to the lay partners in school management rather than to professional colleagues in national convention assembled. Calamity having supplied the motive, it is to be hoped that henceforth the New York schools, and others wishing to benefit from their experience, will be guided by school facts—complete, classified, and intelligibly presented.